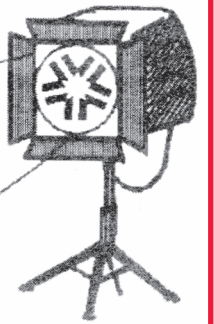


DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA OFFICE ON AGING

Spotlight On Aging



VOLUME XXVI, ISSUE 3

A newsletter for D.C. Seniors

March 2015



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

By John M. Thompson, Ph.D., CPM, FAAMA

In this month's edition of "Spotlight on Aging," I would like to highlight some of the District of Columbia Office on Aging's (DCOA) accomplishments in the last 12 months. These accomplishments are in the areas of protecting the financial interests of our seniors, increasing access to home and community-based services, improving operational processes, combatting social isolation, and connecting with more customers. I presented these accomplishments as part of my testimony at last month's agency oversight hearing before the Committee on Housing and Community Development, which is chaired by the Honorable Anita Bonds, Councilmember At-Large.

Protecting the Financial Interests of Seniors

Property Tax Legislation. DCOA collaborated with AARP's Legal Counsel for the Elderly (LCE) to successfully advocate for the enactment of legislation to address abuses in the real property tax sales process that were resulting in seniors losing their homes through foreclosure due to relatively small sums of unpaid real property taxes. Based on LCE's analysis of the tax sale lists provided by the Office of Tax and Revenue, the number of tax sales of properties coded as "senior" fell from 26 in 2013 to just 9 in 2014, a reduction of 65 percent.

Financial Exploitation. DCOA is collaborating with the District's Elder Abuse Prevention Committee and the U.S. Consumer Financial Protection Bureau to implement "Money Smart for Older Adults" to educate seniors on how to recognize and prevent financial exploitation. Money Smart for Older Adults is an interactive module that has been well received at DCOA's sen-

ior wellness centers, and we encourage you to sign up today.

Increasing Access to Home and Community-Based Services and Supports

Alzheimer's Disease Initiative. In October 2014, the Administration for Community Living (ACL) awarded DCOA a competitive \$1 million, three-year federal grant to further develop a dementia-capable system of long-term services and supports (LTSS) for persons living with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias (ADRD) and their caregivers.

With this funding, DCOA plans to expand access to services for customers living alone with ADRD, offer money management services for persons with mild cases of ADRD, expand a respite care program in underserved Wards 7 and 8, and create a behavioral symptom management training program to enhance professionals' understanding of ADRD.

Falls Prevention. In response to data reported by Dr. Roger A. Mitchell, Jr., the District's Chief Medical Examiner, DCOA launched the Falls Prevention Program in July 2014. According to Dr. Mitchell's 2013 data, 70 percent of accidental deaths among District residents age 65 and older were due to falls, which makes it the leading cause of deaths among older adults for the fourth year in a row.

Through this new program, DCOA organized a District-wide educational campaign around falls prevention, which included facilitator-led seminars and television commercials that aired between July 2014 and September 2014. In conjunction with the education campaign, DCOA is currently contracting with occupational therapists to

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Recently, DCOA Executive Director John M. Thompson, Ph.D., CPM, FAAMA, had an opportunity to travel to Portland, Ore., to tour the Bridge Meadows intergenerational housing campus. Bridge Meadows offers apartment living for residents 55 years and older, within an innovative community that brings together three generations to support families adopting children from foster care. Housing at Bridge Meadows offers an opportunity for seniors to have a sense of community and purpose. Additionally, the community helps combat social isolation for seniors, which is important for a person's mental well-being.

Through a partnership with the D.C. Child and Family Services Agency, Generations of Hope Development Corporation and other community-based organizations, DCOA is partnering to introduce intergenerational housing to the District.

"I can't wait to bring this to the District of Columbia!" — Dr. John M. Thompson

For more information on this new initiative, please contact Darrell Jackson at 202-727-8371 or darrell.jacksonjr@dc.gov.

DCOA Volunteer First Responders

D.C. Office on Aging is actively recruiting seniors, former first responders, lead agency personnel and college students to participate in the District of Columbia's First Respon-

der training. In the event of an emergency, disaster or catastrophe, attendees would be equipped to assist. For more information, please call Sandra Lee at 202-727-7402.

Mark Your Calendar!

The District of Columbia Office on Aging, in collaboration with the D.C. Department of Parks and Recreation, will hold a Community Health and Wellness Fair.

Wednesday, April 8, from 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Emery Recreation Center
5701 Georgia Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20011

For more information, contact Mark Bjorge at 202-374-9890 or Mark.Bjorge@dc.gov.



GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

MURIEL BOWSER, MAYOR

D.C. OFFICE ON AGING NEWSLETTER

Director's message

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perform in-home falls risk screenings. As part of the home visit, the specialists will share recommendations with the seniors on how to eliminate fall hazards.

Improving Operational Processes

What a Waste Initiative. Through a partnership with The National Foundation to End Senior Hunger (NFESH), DCOA launched What a Waste™, a new initiative to combat senior hunger by reducing and recapturing food waste in the District of Columbia.

Through the partnership, NFESH and DCOA have implemented a two-year high-tech pilot study at congregate meal sites located in three senior wellness centers. This innovative project

is designed to help senior nutrition programs identify and categorize unnecessary waste that can be reduced, as well as waste that cannot be eliminated in order to recapture and convert it into compost. The compost will be used to fertilize onsite gardens to allow our centers to grow fresh herbs and vegetables. In December, DCOA composted 438 pounds of food, which is the equivalent of reducing the carbon dioxide emissions created from driving a car 435 miles.

Another highlight of this project was reducing bread roll waste by 57 percent in just two months as the food vendor changed the type of roll and has reduced the number of times it serves rolls weekly. DCOA also noted that a large volume of milk was being discarded due to lactose intolerance for some seniors while others found it

unappetizing. The vendor has replaced milk with yogurt during some of the meals, which means that seniors can consume the appropriate amounts of calcium and Vitamin D.

Finally, in reviewing the food waste data as compared to the meal orders, DCOA noticed that one reason for the food waste is over-ordering by the sites. DCOA has worked with each of the sites to improve the precision and efficiency of the meal orders.

Combating Social Isolation

The Seabury Connector Card. The Connector Card Program, which was formerly the "Call-N-Ride Coupon Program," was implemented on December 1, 2014. The program enhancement broadens seniors' options for accessing public transportation without restrictions. This is a cost-sharing program in

which seniors pay a sliding fee based on their income and DCOA subsidizes expenses up to \$100 per card per month on a Connector Visa Card. The Visa Card can be used on any public transportation that accepts this method of payment for transportation in the Greater Washington Metropolitan area. This program is a significant improvement over the long waits and no shows from taxi cabs that seniors experienced under the Call-N-Ride Coupon Program, as they now have greater access to a variety of transportation options.

Intergenerational Program. In partnership with D.C. Public Schools (DCPS) and Jumpstart, DCOA is connecting seniors with early childhood students to read to the students, provide one-on-one tutorials, and facilitate special activities. For the seniors, it is an opportunity for them to give back in a very meaningful way while combating social isolation.

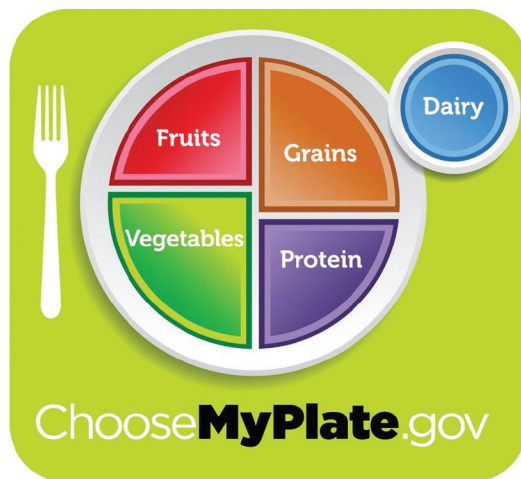
For the children, it is an opportunity to gain wisdom and acquire life skills from the seniors, while sharing their joy, energy and enthusiasm about learning with the seniors. For the teachers, it provides them with additional assistance in the classroom that enhances the students' overall learning experience.

Connecting with More Customers

Long-Term Care Planning Guide. DCOA created and has distributed nearly 31,000 free long-term care planning guides to senior centers, hospitals and doctors' offices, District libraries and recreation centers, and churches across the city. This guide is intended to help residents understand long-term care, the importance of planning in advance for long-term care, and the resources available to District residents. Residents can also find a number of tools that will assist in analyzing their current situations and help individuals to start thinking about future needs.

Our agency is very excited about the aforementioned accomplishments, but we will not become complacent as we have plenty of work ahead of us as we improve the lives of more seniors, persons living with disabilities, and family caregivers.

If you did not join us for the oversight hearing, we encourage you to attend the agency's next hearing, which is the budget hearing. It is scheduled for Thursday, April 23, 2015 at 11 a.m. at the historic John A. Wilson Building in Room 120. I look forward to seeing you at that hearing! In the interim, if you would like to learn more about DCOA's programs or to obtain the long-term care planning guide, please contact us at 202-724-5622.



March is National Nutrition Month®

Bite into a Healthy Lifestyle.

Make smarter food choices and get daily exercise to achieve and maintain a healthy weight, reduce the risk of chronic disease, and promote overall health. The D.C. Office on Aging (DCOA) offers many nutrition and wellness programs to help seniors maintain a healthy lifestyle.

Make Smarter Food Choices at Congregate Meal Sites

DCOA offers delicious and healthy lunches at congregate meal sites throughout the city for older adults that have difficulty preparing meals on their own and want to socialize with other DC seniors.

To learn more, visit:

<http://dcoa.dc.gov/page/food-meals-and-nutrition>

Need Help Buying Healthy Food?

Get a free bag of shelf-stable healthy foods by joining the **Commodity Supplemental Food Program** and get fresh produce by joining the **Senior Farmers Market Program**, which provides vouchers for use at participating farmers markets across the city.

There is a Federal income requirement to qualify for these programs.

Call for 202-644-9880 to enroll or learn more about these services.

Get Daily Exercise at Senior Wellness Centers

DCOA offers fun fitness classes and health education at six senior wellness centers across the District. This spring, many centers will offer gardening classes, too!

To learn more, visit:

<http://dcoa.dc.gov/service/senior-wellness-centers>



For more information, contact your local agency:

Ward 1: Terrific Inc., 202-234-4128

Ward 2: Terrific Inc., 202-595-1990

Ward 3: Iona Senior Services, 202-966-1055

Ward 4: Terrific Inc., 202-882-1374

Ward 5: Seabury Resources for Aging- Ward 5, 202-529-8701

Ward 6: Seabury Resources for Aging- Ward 6, 202-397-1725

Ward 7: East River Family Strengthening Collaborative, 202-534-4880

Ward 8: Family Matters of Greater Washington, 202-562-6860

For additional questions, please contact DCOA: 202-724-5622.

What Can You Do About Debt Collection Problems?

If you're an older consumer and you're having trouble with debt collectors, you're not alone. According to U.S. Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, "since July 2013, older Americans have submitted approximately 8,700 complaints to us about debt collection."

Their top debt collection complaint is that the debt collectors attempt to collect funds that consumers do not owe, do not recognize, or believe are wrong. The second most common complaint is about the collectors' communication tactics.

Here are four things that you or your loved ones can do when experiencing debt collection problems:

1. Get more information if you don't recognize the debt

Older consumers report that debt collectors may have inaccurate or inadequate information, and sometimes don't provide sufficient information to help them identify the debt. Almost one-third of the older consumers who submitted a complaint couldn't identify the debt being collected.

First things first! Ask the debt collector for the company's name and address. If the debt collector refuses to give you this information, you may be dealing with a fraud.

If you think that a caller may be a fake debt collector: Ask the caller for his or her name, company, street address, telephone number, and professional license number.

If you have the company's name and address but you don't recognize the debt, ask for more information in writing. You can start by using the sample letter at <http://1.usa.gov/182c2R9>.

Send this letter as soon as you can — if at all possible, within 30 days of when a debt collector contacts you the first time about a debt.

2. Dispute the debt if it's not yours or if the amount is wrong

You can write a letter disputing the debt or any portion of the debt. It's important to do so as soon as possible after you're first contacted, and to keep copies of any letters you send.

If you dispute a debt (or part of a debt) in writing within 30 days of when you receive the required information from the debt collector, the debt collector cannot call or contact you until after the debt collector has obtained verification of the debt and has provided the verification of the debt in writing to you. You can use this sample letter at <http://1.usa.gov/18pRp2C>.

3. Stop harassing and/or offensive calls

Older consumers told us that debt collectors sometimes refuse to take "No" for an answer, reporting in their complaints that collectors often use offensive language and make threats. To

one extreme, we've also heard about collectors making successive calls using profanity or derogatory names.

You don't have to put up with it. You can send a letter to the debt collector telling it to stop contacting you. If you dispute the amount due, or you don't believe that it's your debt, put that in the letter, too.

Telling a debt collector to stop contacting you does not stop the collection, including the filing of a lawsuit against you or reporting negative information to a credit reporting company.

4. Know your rights: Your federal benefits have many protections from garnishment in collection

Many older consumers rely on Social Security or other federal benefits, and frequently complained that debt

collectors threatened them with garnishment of these benefits. **Most federal benefits, such as Social Security, Veterans' (VA) benefits, and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits, are protected in debt collection.** There are exceptions for, among other things, money owed in child support, spousal support, federal student loans, or for federal taxes.

When you receive federal benefits by direct deposit to your checking account, your bank or credit union is required automatically to protect up to two months of these benefits that are directly deposited into your account. If you receive your benefits on a government issued prepaid card, they usually are protected too. Some exceptions may exist for debts owed to a federal

or state agency.

If you're not sure if your federal benefits are being wrongfully garnished, you should seek legal advice.

Here's how you can find a lawyer:

Call your local legal aid office, where you may qualify for free legal services. See http://bit.ly/legalhelp_directory for local offices.

Call Legal Counsel for the Elderly at 202-434-2170, where you can get free legal advice and assistance.

Submit a debt collection complaint online at <http://1.usa.gov/1AbOKP> or by calling 1-855-411-2372. We'll forward your issue to the company and work to get you a response, give you a tracking number, and keep you updated on the status of your complaint.

**DC Department of Parks and Recreation
presents the**

32nd Annual DC Senior Games May 4 - 15, 2015

**Opening Ceremony Monday, May 4, 2015
Closing Ceremony Monday, May 18, 2015**

Registration now through Friday, April 24th. Participants may register through DPR's online registration system or by visiting any DPR recreation center. There is a \$40 per athlete registration fee.



The DC Senior Games will be held from 8:00 AM - 5:00 PM at various DPR facilities and locations around the District of Columbia.

For more information, call Jennifer Hamilton at (202) 664-7153 or visit us at bit.ly/2015DCSG



Community Calendar

March Events

3rd, 17th and 31st • noon

The D.C. Caregivers Online Chat at Noon is held bi-weekly to provide caregivers with assistance through an online forum. Log on for advice, resources and tips to assist you with your caregiving responsibilities. If you are not available at noon, check back at your convenience and hit replay to see the entire chat. Join the discussion at www.dcoa.dc.gov/page/caregiver-chat. For more information, contact Linda Irizarry at 202-535-1442 or linda.irizarry@dc.gov.

4th • 9 a.m.

Seabury Resources will hold a Ward 5 Advisory Council meeting at 2900 Newton St. NE. For more information, contact Thelma Hines at 202-529-8701, ext. 222.

6th and 16th • noon to 3 p.m.

The D.C. Office on Aging will provide information on its resources and services at Washington Hospital Center, Physician's Office Building, 106 Irving St. NW.

11th • 10:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Hayes Senior Wellness Center, 500 K St. NE, will present a Community Health, Wellness and Informational Fair. Contact Andre Lane or Sherrell Briscoe at 202-727-0357.

12th • 10 a.m. to noon

Join the Ward 4 Mini Commission on Aging at its monthly meeting held at the Fourth District Police Precinct, 6001 Georgia Ave. NW.

12th • 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

The D.C. Office on Aging and the Office of Unified Communications will conduct a Smart911 Presentation and Registration event at the Deanwood Recreation Center KEEN Senior Program, 1350 49th St. NE. For more information or to schedule a presentation, call 202-724-5622.

12th • 11:30 a.m.

Gettysburg (Fort Lincoln 1) will hold a town hall meeting at 2855 Bladensburg Rd. NE. For more information, contact Thelma Hines at 202-529-8701, ext. 222.

19th • 10 a.m.

The D.C. Office on Aging (DCOA) Ambassador Program is a free, interactive, member-based program designed to reach out to older adults and their caregivers to help them learn about the services and resources available to them through DCOA. If you are interested in expanding your network and educating older adults about the services and resources available to them, join the next Ambassador Training Workshop to learn about all of the programs and services that DCOA offers to the community and how you can become an Ambassador. All workshops include an overview of Office on Aging programs and services, information on how to access resources, and guidance on your role as an advocate. Call 202-724-5622 to register today.

21st • 1 to 3 p.m.

Come to a program called Golden Era at Mt. Zion Baptist Church, 5101 14th St. NW. To learn more, call 202-726-2220.

23rd • 7 p.m.

Iona Senior Services presents a play reading in partnership with the Playwright's Forum. In *Kitchen Sink* by Paula Stone, after a lifetime of cooking, a woman sells the contents of her kitchen in a yard sale. Admission is \$5. Iona is located at 4125 Albemarle St. NW. To reserve a seat, call Patricia Dubroof at 202-895-9407.

25th • 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Congress Heights Senior Wellness Center, 3500 Martin Luther King, Jr. Ave. SE, will present a Community Health, Wellness and Informational Fair. For more information, call 202-563-7225.

26th • 10 to 11 a.m.

The D.C. Office on Aging will provide information on its resources and services at Zion Baptist Church, 4850 Blagden Ave. NW.

31st • 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Chevy Chase Community Center will hold a Community Health, Wellness and Informational Fair. The center is located at 5601 Connecticut Ave. NW.

Contact Chevy Chase Community Center staff at 202-282-2204.



SPOTLIGHT ON AGING

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Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination which is prohibited by the Act. In addition, harassment based on any of the above protected categories is prohibited by the Act. Discrimination in violation of the Act will not be tolerated. Violators will be subjected to disciplinary action.

The Office on Aging is in partnership with the District of Columbia Recycling Program.

Compete to Become Ms. Senior D.C. 2015!

Are you a D.C. resident who is age 60 years or older and interested in representing your peers as Ms. Senior D.C. 2015? Are you actively involved in your community? Consider becoming a contestant in the next Ms. Senior D.C. Pageant. Contestants are judged on a personal interview, their philosophy of life, their talent and evening gown presentations. The winner will represent the District of Columbia and compete in the Ms. Senior America Pageant. For more information on how to sign up, visit www.dcoa.dc.gov to fill out your application online or call 202-724-5622 for more information.

